

Message Text

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72

ACTION EUR-25

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9810

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

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AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY VALLETTA

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

USMISSION OECD PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L LONDON 05124

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: UK, MT, PFOR

SUBJECT: MINTOFF'S VISIT TO UK, APRIL 24-26

1. SUMMARY: DURING TALKS WITH WILSON AND CALLAGHAN
APRIL 25, MINTOFF FINALLY ACCEPTED LONG-STANDING BRITISH
OFFER TO EXTEND ONE MILLION POUNDS IN TECHNICAL ASSIST-
ANCE TO MALTA ON CONDITION THAT MALTA PAY INTEREST DUE
ON UK LOAN. MINTOFF SPENT GREAT DEAL OF TIME EXPLAINING
"HIS PLAN" FOR EC COOPERATION WITH MEDITERRANEAN STATES,
BUT RECEIVED NO ENCOURAGEMENT FROM BRITISH. POSSIBILITY
OF FUTURE BRITISH DEFENSE CUTS AND HOW THEY MIGHT AFFECT
MALTA WAS, ACCORDING TO FCO, NOT DISCUSSED AT ALL.
END SUMMARY

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2. ALAN GODDISON, HEAD OF SOUTHERN EUROPEAN DEPARTMENT,

FCO, HAS GIVEN US RUNDOWN ON PRIME MINISTER MINTOFF'S CURRENT VISIT TO THE UK. MINTOFF HAD MEETINGS YESTERDAY (APRIL 24) WITH PRIME MINISTER WILSON (TWO HOURS) AND FOREIGN SECRETARY CALLAGHAN (SEVENTY-FIVE MINUTES), AND WAS GUEST OF HONOR AT A STATE LUNCH HOSTED BY CALLAGHAN AND A WORKING DINNER HOSTED BY WILSON. TODAY HE IS IN SCOTLAND LOOKING AT AN OIL RIG AND TOMORROW HE WILL VISIT THE NETHERLANDS BEFORE RETURNING TO MALTA FROM LONDON ON SATURDAY.

3. DURING YESTERDAY'S MEETINGS, MINTOFF FINALLY ACCEPTED LONG-STANDING BRITISH OFFER TO EXTEND ONE MILLION POUNDS IN TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO MALTA ON CONDITION THAT MALTA PAY THE INTEREST DUE ON UK LOAN. MINTOFF AGREED TO PAY NOW THE TWO INSTALLMENTS OF 330,000 POUNDS EACH THAT WERE DUE MARCH 31, 1972 AND MARCH 31, 1973, AND TO PAY ON MARCH 31, 1975, THE INSTALLMENTS FOR 1974 AND 1975. (GOODISON STRESSED THAT THESE DETAILS OF THE REPAYMENT HAD NOT BEEN MADE PUBLIC AND MUST BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL.)

4. MINTOFF TOOK UP MOST OF THE TIME OF THE WORKING SESSIONS WITH WILSON AND CALLAGHAN EXPATIATING IN GRANDIOSE BUT VAGUE TERMS ON "HIS PLAN" FOR COOPERATION BETWEEN THE EC AND ALL MEDITERRANEAN STATES. HE HAS IN MIND SOMETHING DIFFERENT FROM AND CONSIDERABLY MORE COMPREHENSIVE THAN THE INCIPIENT EC-ARAB DIALOGUE. HIS HOSTS GAVE HIM NO ENCOURAGEMENT, AND EXPRESSED THEIR OWN PREFERENCE FOR FOLLOWING THROUGH WITH THE EC-ARAB DIALOGUE PROVIDING IT DID NOT TOUCH ON OIL OR IN ANY WAY COMPLICATE DR. KISSINGER'S EFFORTS TO REACH A PEACE SETTLEMENT.

5. WHEN ASKED, GOODISON STATED CATEGORICALLY THAT THE SUBJECT OF POSSIBLE BRITISH DEFENSE CUTS WAS NOT DISCUSSED WHILE MINTOFF WAS AT FCO, AND TO THE BEST OF

HIS KNOWLEDGE, HAD NOT BEEN DISCUSSED WITH PRIME MINISTER EITHER. THIS REINFORCES MINTOFF'S OWN PUBLIC STATEMENT, AFTER MEETING WITH WILSON, THAT SUBJECT HAD NOT COME UP.

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6. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH IT MAY WELL BE TRUE THAT SUBJECT OF POSSIBLE BRITISH DEFENSE CUTS AND THEIR IMPACT ON BRITISH FORCES IN MALTA NEVER CAME UP IN FORMAL DISCUSSIONS, IT IS NOT UNLIKELY THAT IN BRIEF PRIVATE SESSIONS WITH WILSON OR CALLAGHAN, MINTOFF MAY HAVE SOUGHT REASSURANCE ABOUT THE FUTURE OF BRITISH PRESENCE IN MALTA. IN PUBLIC AT LEAST, HE PROFESSED COMPLETE

CONFIDENCE THAT PRESENT ANGLO-MALTESE DEFENSE ARRANGEMENTS WOULD REMAIN IN EFFECT.

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